Planas highlights the socio-economic value of quality for rural development

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Luis Planas, opened on Monday the XXXIII edition of the Gourmet Hall, the International Food and Beverage Quality Fair, where he stressed that the agrifood quality figures (Protected Designations of Origin, Protected Geographical Indications and Guaranteed Traditional Specialties) are fundamental strategic elements that contribute to the development and sustainability of rural territories.

> In his speech, Luis Planas has underlined the great importance of this international fair, the only one in Europe dedicated to the promotion of high quality agri-food products.

Since its inception in 1987, the Salon Gourmets has been configured as a showcase for high-end products, most of them under the distinctive quality distinctive.

Since then, the significant growth of this fair has been a reflection of consumers' growing interest in

quality food and beverages. Of the 73 producers that exhibited their 1,800 products in the first edition, celebrated in the mythical pavilions of the Casa de Campo, this year has been counted with more than 2,000 exhibitors, 45,000 products and forecasts of more than 100,000 professional visitors, coming from around 30 countries.

In this context, Planas **has emphasized the importance of the agri-food sector for the Spanish economy, to which it contributes a gross added value of more than 107,000 million euros (11% of GDP)**. He also recalled that Spain is the eighth largest exporter in the world (the fourth in the EU), with a value of more than 50,000 million euros.

DIFFERENTIATED QUALITY FIGURES

In this area, the minister stressed that the 348 figures of differentiated quality provide an economic value of more than 7,100 million euros, of which 40% correspond to PDO / PGI supraautonómicas. Therefore, these figures are a key element in the development and sustainability policies of rural territories.

> He pointed out that Spain is the third EU country with the highest number of quality indications (PDO, PGI and TSG), behind Italy and France.

Likewise, Planas has pointed out that the quality of our productions is the basis of the "Food of Spain" strategy, driven to value our culinary and cultural heritage, and bring them closer to the new demands of consumers, increasingly concerned about what who eat and to know the history of the products, knowing where and how they have been produced.

In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has programmed various promotional activities to raise awareness of the quality and variety of our food, and the importance of the Spanish agri-food sector. The main objective is to associate the Food brand of Spain with a modern lifestyle concept, attractive and proud of what is ours.

The Spanish agri-food system, Luis Planas has pointed out, is the basis of our gastronomy and tourism, thus, he added, the strength of our gastronomic sector allows us to project an image of modern, open and global Spain.

In addition, the minister has referred to the growth of the organic sector in Spain, whose internal consumption gradually increases to reach a value of almost 2,000 million euros and a per capita expenditure of 42 euros. Spain has much to contribute in this field, since it leads the ecological surface of the EU, with more than 2 million hectares.